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THE NEWSPAPER FOR CHATHAM, GILLINGHAM, ROCHESTER, STROOD, RAINHAM & DISTRICT



Issue No 118
Available from Wednesday,
December 16, 2009



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ISSN 1753-119-5



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WHO THE HILL IS THAT?

TV Burp host Harry Hill has been signing copies of his latest book at Bluewater. The big-collared comic, who picked up two British Comedy Awards last week, was at the shopping centre's Waterstone's book-sellers on Thursday. Thousands of fans queued to meet the comedian, who was joined by the Knitted Character and 'Heather' from EastEnders.

Hill captured the hearts of Medway fans earlier this year when he announced his allegiance to the towns, saying on his hit ITV show: "Big up the Medway posse."

EXCLUSIVE

BY SIMON ROBINSON

UP TO 300 BAE Systems workers will lose their jobs in the New Year, Yourmedway has learned.

Employees at the Rochester arm of the multinational defence, security and aerospace company were told of the redundancies on Monday morning – ten days before Christmas Day.

The job losses will see staff levels at the Maidstone Road site fall by up to a fifth. Workers said they were "stunned" by the news. One employee, who did not want to be named, said: "Everyone's really down."

"My boss called everyone in my team together for an urgent briefing shortly after 10am. We knew it was going to be bad news."

"I can't believe how many people they want to axe though. A lot of people were just saying, 'Thanks, merry Christmas'. The atmosphere in the office is really bad."

Another worker, who asked not to be identified, said: "The timing is incredibly insensitive. 'Why not break the news in the New Year?' Now all 1,600 employees will go through Christmas not knowing if their job is safe. I'm in shock."

BAE's Dan Gobel, president for platform solutions at Rochester, said: "We recognise this is an extremely difficult period for our employees and their families."

"Regrettably, this is a difficult but necessary response to a changing market environment. As a responsible company, we are committed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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TOP TV CLIPS



1 Tony Joseph from Cricket for Change on teaching blind and visually-impaired youngsters to play. **Search 'cricket'**



2 KOS Media Business Challenge 2009 double award winner Charity Bank explains its ethical lending. **Search 'Bank'**



3 Gillingham manager Mark Stimson on plans for the weekend game... and Christmas. **Search 'Gillingham'**

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NEWS EDITOR: Simon Robinson 01303 817185

GROUP EDITOR: Gary Wright 01303 817032

WEBSITE: www.yourmedway.co.uk

TELEPHONE ADVERTISING: 01303 817110

FAX: (Advertising) 01303 817002

EMAIL: Editorial: yourmedway@kosmedia.co.uk. Sales: advertising@kosmedia.co.uk

HEAD OFFICE ADDRESS: Apple Barn, Hythe Road, Smeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SR

Printed by Newsfax

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Forces Bishop's views on Taliban 'loyalty' backfire

BY SIMON ROBINSON

THE new bishop for the Armed Forces has come under fire after saying the Taliban can be admired for their faith and loyalty.

The Rt Rev Stephen Venner, who recently moved to Rochester, made the controversial comments during an interview with a national newspaper published on Monday.

He said: "We've been too simplistic in our attitude towards the Taliban."

"There's a large number of things that the Taliban say and stand for which none of us in the west could approve, but simply to say therefore that everything they do is bad is not helping the situation because it's not honest really."

"The Taliban can perhaps be admired for their conviction to their faith and their sense of loyalty to each other."

Influence

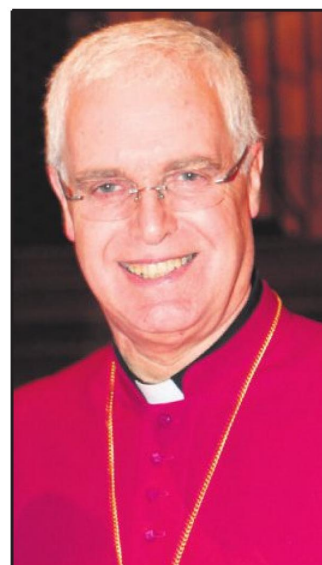
"We must remember that there are a lot of people who are under their influence for a whole range of reasons, and we simply can't lump all of those together."

"To blanket them all as evil and paint them as black is not helpful in a very complex situation."

Dr Venner, 65, who served as Bishop of Dover for ten years before taking up his new role and moving to Medway, said everyone in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, would have to be included in discussions to find a solution to the conflict.

Speaking to the Daily Telegraph, the bishop said: "Afghanistan is going we hope in the end to find a way to live together with justice and prosperity for all."

"In order to do that we have to involve all the people of Afghanistan to find it."



UNDER FIRE: Rt Rev Stephen Venner praised the Taliban's 'faith and sense of loyalty'

"It is that lasting and just peace that will in the end justify the sacrifices our servicemen and women have made."

The bishop's comments were condemned by MPs, political commentators and the families of British soldiers injured or killed in action.

One MP accused Dr Venner of giving "comfort and succour to the enemy".

Speaking to the BBC in the fall-out of the newspaper article, the bishop admitted he had been naive.

He said: "I am not trying to support the Taliban. Very far from it. I am very supportive of our forces."

"And if what I've said and the way it's been reported, has caused offence, then of course I'm deeply grieved, and very apologetic, and if that comes under the heading of naivety then I plead guilty."

yourmedway
NEWS IN BRIEF

How police nearly shot actor Craig on film set

CORONATION Street star Craig Charles was almost shot dead by a police sniper during the filming of a gangland movie.

The 45-year-old Corrie actor – who plays cabbie Lloyd Mullaney in the soap – was taking part in the filming of *The Dealer on the River Medway* when armed cops surrounded the set.

Filming of the movie, directed by former BBC music composer Tony Royden, had to be stopped when the Red Dwarf actor realised there was an infrared laser dot on his chest as a police marksman took aim.

Mr Royden said: "We tried to conceal the filming but apparently the police got five different calls telling them someone was being murdered."

Drivers fined after road tax clampdown

NEARLY 100 drivers were prosecuted last month for having no road tax.

Medway council, Kent Police and the DVLA took action against 94 drivers throughout November, seizing the vehicles of 78 of these motorists.

The remaining 16 vehicle owners received a fine and a surety to the DVLA totalling £260.

Medway council's community safety boss, Rehman Chishti, said: "There is no excuse for not paying up. Initiatives such as this ensure that our roads remain safe."

Consultants rewarded for exceptional efforts

TWO top hospital consultants who went above and beyond the call of duty have been recognised by the Department of Health for their contribution to patients and the NHS.

Surgeon Chris Butler and anaesthetist Kirti Mukherjee received bronze awards in the 2009 clinical excellence awards.

Chris, recognised for his contribution to both local and national research, teaching and training within the NHS, said: "It is a great honour not only for me to have my contributions to the NHS recognised in this way, but also for the Trust – an organisation I have been proud to work for and represent for nearly 20 years."

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Attack victim launches online call for justice

EXCLUSIVE

BY SIMON ROBINSON

A BRAVE young woman who was battered by a drunken thug has launched an online campaign for justice after seeing her attacker walk free from court.

Sarah Walsh, 21, from Gillingham, suffered life-threatening injuries in the attack, including a fractured nose, cheek and jaw, torn ligaments in her shoulder and knee and a deep gash in the back of her head.

She was also left with blurred vision, a perforated eardrum and bruises all over her body.

The man who inflicted the horrific injuries was Terry Day, the boyfriend of Sarah's friend Chelsea Grant.

The 40-year-old pleaded guilty to actual bodily harm against Sarah, assault against Chelsea and criminal damage, yet he walked free from Medway Magistrates Court with just a 90-day suspended sentence, 60-day curfew and order to carry out 200 hours unpaid work.

Sarah, who is awaiting surgery for her injuries, said the justice system had failed her.

But the MidKent College student has thrown off the victim tag to call for a change in the law.

She has set up the Battered and Bruised: Where is the Justice? group on social networking site Facebook, which has already been backed by more than 250 supporters.

Sarah said: "I can't believe Terry was allowed



BATTERED: Terry Day walked free from court with a suspended sentence, curfew and work order after attacking Sarah Walsh

to walk free from court. He is a big danger. He almost killed me.

"I feel really let down by the justice system. I've always been supportive of the police force and justice system, but since the verdict I feel like we've lost our community.

"The Facebook group is for all those people who have suffered but have not had the justice they deserve. They should change the law."

Sarah described the horrific night in March when Terry attacked her.

She said: "My friend Chelsea, her boyfriend Terry and I went for some drinks. When it was time to leave, Terry got agitated because the

taxi didn't turn up.

"He lost his temper with Chelsea and attacked her. I tried to calm him down and he turned on me. He punched me in the face and all over my body. He then grabbed my arm and leg and threw me across the room.

"All because I stepped in to help my friend." Day, of West Street, West Malling, admitted ABH, assault and criminal damage at Medway Magistrates Court on Friday, October 16.

He was given a 30-day prison sentence for each offence, suspended for 12 months. He was also ordered to pay £750 compensation and £100 costs.

Commuters left stranded by first high speed train

HUNDREDS of angry commuters were left stranded on Monday after a packed high speed train service was cancelled.

The 7.37am train from Rochester to London St Pancras failed to reach its destination, after a member of staff missed the train.

The frustrated commuters' inaugural journey on HS1 ended at Ebbsfleet, forcing workers to change trains to complete the trip.

Mark Reckless, parliamentary candidate for the Rochester and Strood seat, was among those who were late following Southeastern Train's cancellation of its flagship service.

The Tory councillor said: "It came as a great disappointment to me and my fellow commuters who arrived at Strood station this morning to catch the 7.42am high speed service to find it had been cancelled because of missing train crew.

"To say I am furious is something of an understatement, particularly given the fact that it is going to cost passengers from Strood £106.52 a week for the privilege of being late for work as I was!

"Hoping for the best, but expecting the worst" probably best describes the attitude of commuters regarding the introduction of the new Southeastern timetable."

A spokesman for Southeastern Trains said: "The 7.37am train from Rochester was unable to complete its journey to St Pancras due to a staff shortage.

"Southeastern is running a new timetable that is new to customers as well as staff - everything changes.

"We operate more than 2,000 services a day, so inevitably there will be some delays and cancellations. However, this is a very important and busy day for us and things have largely gone very well."

BAE calls for redundancy volunteers

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE
response to a changing market environment. As a responsible company, we are committed to providing support for affected staff including outplacement advice, redeployment and retraining."

The job losses come after similar cutbacks were announced in September.

BAE bosses said they aimed to shut the Woodford plant, near Stockport, at the end of 2012, with the loss of 630 jobs.

A further 205 positions are to go at BAE's Samlesbury site, and 170 at its Warton facility, both in Lancashire.

In addition, 111 jobs will go in Farnborough. To minimise compulsory redundancies in Rochester, the company will launch a voluntary severance scheme. Compulsory redundancies will be implemented if there are not enough volunteers.

BAE Systems provides a range of products and services for air, land and naval forces, as well as advanced electronics, security, IT solutions and customer support.

With approximately 105,000 employees worldwide, BAE Systems' sales exceeded £18.5 billion in 2008.

Police hunt hooded man after raids at three bookmakers

POLICE are hunting this hooded man after armed robberies on three Medway bookmakers.

The man targeted shops in Strood and Snodland over four days.

Each time he threatened staff, claiming to be carrying a weapon, before leaving with cash.

The Association of British Bookmakers is offering a reward for any information leading to the arrest and charge of the offender.

The first robbery took place at the Coral Bookmakers in Strood High Street at 11am on Sunday, November 29.

A man then struck at the Coral Bookmakers in Gun Lane, Strood, at 8.50pm the following day.

The Choice Bet bookmakers in Snodland High Street was held up at noon on Wednesday, December 2.

Chief Superintendent Steve Corbishley said: "We are connecting these robberies and are keen to hear from anyone who may have information about any of the incidents.

"Fortunately this type of offence is



rare and no-one was hurt, but staff were shaken by the events.

"There have not been any further robberies, and I would urge the man or anyone who recognises the man to contact police immediately."

The man is white, aged between 20 and 30 years old and 6ft tall.

He was wearing a light green parka-style coat with a furry collar, light-coloured jeans, sunglasses and brown shoes during all three robberies. Call police on 01634 792567 or Kent CrimeStoppers on 0800 555 111, or e-mail the Medway Area Major Enquiry Team at amet.medway@kent.pnn.police.uk.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Hospital to be filled with cheer by carol singers

YOUNGSTERS from Skinner Street Primary School will sing carols to patients at Medway Maritime Hospital today.

The choir is hoping to bring festive cheer to the hospital.

Senior hospital chaplain Rev Steve Spencer said: "We have been welcoming school choirs for the last six or so years and it has become something of a tradition that we look forward to. All the patients appreciate the singing and it really lifts their spirits."

TV deal could be of help to youngsters in hospice

ELECTRICAL goods giant Sony is urging customers to take part in the company's charity TV tradeathon.

If more than 75 gadget fans trade in their set at Sony's flagship Bluewater store before Christmas Eve, the multinational firm has promised to donate a £700 flat-screen HD TV to Demelza Hospice Care for Children.

The tradeathon sees customers receive up to £150 off a new Sony Bravia LCD TV.

Free food for one year a reward for plucky taster

MEAT-loving Joanne Collins has been given a year-long free meal ticket after being chosen as Harvester's official chicken tester.

The 37-year-old, from Rochester, is one of a dozen new recruits to the restaurant chain's nationwide food panel.

She will now enjoy a free, three-course meal for two once every three months at the Queens Head on Maidstone Road, Wigmore.

Joanne said: "I've always been a fan of Harvester and I will take my new responsibilities very seriously."

Fire service wins warm appreciation in report

MEDWAY'S firefighters have been praised in the industry regulator's latest report.

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority is said to perform well, have strong leadership and a good grasp of its finances.

Chief Fire Officer Charlie Hendry said: "I know how hard our staff work to provide the best possible service and so I am delighted that 81 per cent of people questioned, said they are satisfied with our service."

The survey was by the Audit Commission.



REMEMBERING: Shorne Village. c1920s; Strood Dock near the entrance to the Thames and Medway Canal c1920s and cherry pickers at Pump Lane Farm, Rainham, c1900

Picture the past online

■ BY SIMON ROBINSON

MORE than 1,000 historic pictures taken across the Medway Towns have been uploaded onto an extensive online database.

The free photographic website – called Medway Images – was launched this morning. It features a wide range of snapshots dating back to the 1800s and captures the towns' rural and naval history.

Highlights archive include a photo of cherry pickers at Pump Lane Farm in 1900, Eastling Cottage in Borstal taken at around the same time and a stunning Cooling Castle in 1920.

A number of glass plate negatives previously held by the Guildhall Museum in Rochester have also been uploaded onto the website.

Medway Council's community services boss Howard Doe said: "Medway Archive and Local Studies Centre has long been committed to digitising its collections and making its documents available to a wider audience. This project aims to make these images easily available on the internet for everyone to enjoy."

"This has very much been a community project and I would like to thank the team of volunteers who have helped digitise, prepare and process the images, as well as residents who have donated to the centre."

"I hope everyone will learn about Medway's past by viewing these images that reflect

changing history of our neighbourhoods."

See www.medway.gov.uk/medwayimages to view the images. The database is searchable by the names of specific places, streets, buildings, people and landmarks. The search results are sorted and displayed by the date or approximate date of the photographs.

Some of the prints and photographs have been sourced from local government departments, but many have been donated.

Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre is keen to encourage residents to donate more pictures of historical value and would like to hear from anyone who has images they would like to be considered for inclusion.

Call the centre on 01634 332714 or email malsc@medway.gov.uk for details.



WHO NOSE THE SOURCE: MP Jonathan Shaw is pleased Luton should now hopefully smell better

The sweet smell of success

THE pungent Luton Arches pong problem has been solved, according to sewer chiefs.

The mysterious odour has plagued the central Chatham plot for the past few years, leaving residents and motorists clutching their noses and Southern Water bosses scratching their heads.

Sewers beneath the site have been found to be in full working order – and so the source of the problem is still yet to be determined.

But Southern Water's chief executive Les Dawson said he has a sweet-smelling solution: "We have provided air-tight seals to three manhole covers in the area so that

these can be eliminated as a source of odour.

"The sewers have also been scheduled for a six-monthly cycle of cleaning.

"There is anecdotal evidence that odour issues occur after a prolonged dry spell. We have now written to Medway Council to request that the highway gullies are regularly refilled during prolonged dry weather periods to prevent odours rising.

"I am confident the work carried out will result in the elimination of complaints."

Chatham and Aylesford MP Jonathan Shaw said he was delighted that the smell could be neutralised.

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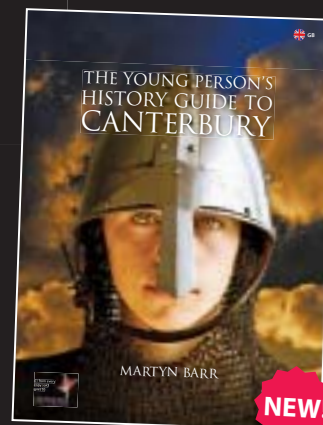
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NEW!



STATE-OF-THE-ART: The £23m Police headquarters in Gillingham was constructed under a private finance initiative

Police aren't even allowed to change loo roll at new HQs

POLICE are so bogged down by red tape at two new stations they can't even change a lightbulb.

Replacing toilet rolls is also off limits for officers at two privately built police "super-stations" in the north of the county.

Kent Police's state-of-the-art £23million Medway Headquarters in Gillingham and the £31m North Kent police station in Gravesend were constructed under private finance initiatives.

And those deals mean maintenance contracts are handled by a private contractor.

As a result frustrated officers have to send off request forms or call a 24-hour hotline for everyday supplies including toilet rolls, light-bulbs and cutlery.

According to Police Review, they must also call the hotline if they want to put up crime prevention posters or even reposition plants and litter bins.

Ian Pointon, chairman of Kent Police Federation, said the latest situation was "bonkers".

Hog-tied

He said: "Police officers are practical, can-do sorts and if they are sitting at their desk and a bulb goes they just want to get up, go to a cupboard, get a new bulb, screw it in and get back to work.

"They don't want to be sitting there in the dark ringing a 24-hour emergency helpline asking for the bulb to be changed.

"But the problem is that if you want a new police station these days, the only way to get funding is a private finance initiative and with that you don't own the building.

"PFIs [private finance initiatives] are a hog-tied agreement that stops officers from taking as routine as changing a light bulb.

"During the Kingsnorth climate change protests in July and August last year, a meeting was held to decide where to place a rubbish bin and a table to serve officers tea and coffee.

"Officers, quite rightly, wanted simply to put a table out with the tea and coffee machines on it and put a bin beside it for the teabags."

■ BY NICK AMES

However Kent Police have said the system is a good one.

Assistant Chief Constable Gary Beautridge said: "The overwhelming majority of staff in North Kent are delighted to be working in an outstanding new building that is one of the most modern police stations in the country. There have been massive benefits for us in moving to a central location and it means we can deliver even better policing in North Kent.

"By using a contractor to undertake the routine service work we free up staff to concentrate on the matters that concern the public - continuing to reduce the level of crime across the county.

"We are absolutely delighted with the equipping and quality of the new police station and look forward to working from there for many years to come. Our relationship with the contractor is excellent."

Simon Redman, director of finance for Kent Police, said: "There is an agreement in place to ensure the smooth day to day running of the PFI police stations which address situations such as the changing of light bulbs and the maintenance of toilets.

"The contractors are responsible for the upkeep of the buildings and have to adhere to strict supply agreements.

"That means if something goes wrong they need to address the issue within an agreed time frame or face a penalty fee. They have set up round the clock helpdesks that allow staff to report any issues by phone or email.

"We believe this offers a more comprehensive package to staff than in the old police stations. The helpdesk is no more bureaucratic than previous processes.

"We have to remember the supplier is responsible for maintaining the building including anything that is placed on the walls.

"They hold the risk and will pick up any financial cost if something goes wrong which is why we advise staff not to take on maintenance jobs themselves."

yourmedway NEWS IN BRIEF

Charge over car break-in

A GILLINGHAM man has been charged with car theft following a break-in earlier this week.

Darryl Davies, of Watling Street, was arrested on Tuesday, December 8 following an investigation into a reported theft around the Darland area.

He admitted stealing £30 from a car on the Darland estate.

The 28-year-old has been released on bail to appear at Medway Magistrates Court on January 7.

Under the terms of his bail, Davies must remain at his home address between 7pm and 7am every day, not enter the Darland estate for any reason and report to Medway Police Station three times a week.

Detective Sergeant Adam Marshall said: "Fortunately reported thefts from motor vehicles are low, but I urge all drivers to ensure money and valuables are not left on display."

Festive flavours at market

A CONTINENTAL Christmas market will be held in Chatham this weekend.

The market boasts a wide range of European gifts, goods and treats.

Items on offer include jewellery, festive preserves and a variety of clothing.

The market will be held in Chatham High Street, at the junction with Railway Street, from 10am to 5pm on Saturday.

It will also be held in the same location on Tuesday, December 22 and Wednesday 23.

Big talk lessons for dads

A FATHER has become the first dad in Medway to complete a course on how to talk to their children more easily about sexual health.

Jay Champion completed the eight-week Speakeasy course alongside six mothers.

The 34-year-old father-of-three said he was now more comfortable talking about the birds and the bees with his children.

He said: "Fathers should be involved in their children's lives and I am now more informed and confident to talk to my children if they have a problem or want to talk to me rather than their mum.

"I would recommend this course to other dads; it's fun, relaxed and you learn interesting information which you can share with your children in the right way."

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Full-time fast rail service promises travel revolution

■ BY ED HILL

MONDAY saw the introduction of the full high-speed rail service to London for Kent.

The 140mph Hitachi Javelin trains will all terminate at St Pancras.

To mark the launch on Monday Dame Kelly Holmes travelled Rochester with transport minister Lord Adonis. The Olympic gold medallist has had one of the trains named after her.

Some towns like Ashford see the new service as vital to their economic and growth plans. The new service means commuters can travel to the capital in 37 minutes from the town. Recent improvements have been made to the

station in time for launch and the trains will be serviced at a new depot built in the town.

Ashford council leader Paul Clokie said: "I am glad that this day has finally arrived. This means we will be able to take Ashford forward to new heights."

However, some towns have lost out in the timetable shake up. Maidstone commuters will now only be able to travel to London Victoria using the old mainline services.

The high-speed service also comes at a price with commuters having to pay a premium. For example, a peak time return from Ashford will cost £48.70, about eight pounds more than the standard fare.

But the new timetable will mean an extra 200 trains will be running across the region and capacity will increase by five per cent.

Transport Secretary, Andrew Adonis said:



Picture: PHIL HOUGHTON

ON TRACK: The full high-speed timetable is now in operation, bringing a long-promised revolution in transport to the county and – it is hoped – many economic benefits in its slipstream

"These fantastic new services, made possible by the Government's investment in this £5.8bn high speed new line, are changing the

transport map of Kent. Journey times have shrunk dramatically, bringing regeneration and new opportunities for investment."

Bullet trains to shake up the timetable

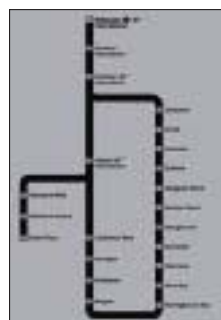
KENT stations will benefit from between three and 12 morning rush-hour services with the arrival of High Speed 1.

The introduction of the 140mph bullet trains has contributed to one of the biggest timetable shake-ups in more than 40 years, with more than 150 stops scheduled every day between 7am and 10am.

As one of the service's main hubs, Ebbsfleet will receive 12 trains during that period while there will be six at each of Medway's five stations as well as at Gravesend, Sittingbourne, Faversham, Margate and Broadstairs.

The new Southeastern timetable – which includes normal mainline services – will provide passengers with more than 200 extra trains per day and boost capacity by five per cent.

However, HS1 fares will increase by about £8 per journey to pay for the technology, adding about £730 to annual season ticket prices. For example, a return ticket from Ashford on HS1 will cost £48.70 compared with £40.60



SITTING COMFORTABLY: Inside the Javelin train; the route and, right, a bullet train and regular Southeastern service side by side

on the mainline, and an annual season ticket will cost £4,536 compared with £3,780. Regular commuters are being advised to visit www.southeasternrailway.co.uk to see how the changes affect them.

Managing director Charles Horton said: "We've worked hard over the years with stakeholders to be able to get to this point and this new timetable is very important for Kent."

"It will provide more choice for

passengers, see the full introduction of high-speed services and help us continue to improve performance levels.

"The majority of passengers will see an improvement in services, but as with all timetables compromises have had to be made and not everyone will be satisfied. However, once we've introduced the timetable we will monitor services closely and work with the Department for Transport to

make any adjustments which are necessary."

Ramsgate, Canterbury West, Ashford, Dover and the two Folkestone stations will each receive five morning rush-hour services per day, while there will be three at Whitstable, Herne Bay and Birchington. Maidstone has been left off the high-speed map altogether, but KCC has revealed plans to build a new station in the county town and link it to HS1.

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High-speed timeline

- December 18, 1996 – Channel Tunnel Rail Link Act passed in Parliament
- September 28, 2003 – Section one of rail link opens between Channel Tunnel and Fawkham Junction, north Kent
- November 14, 2006 – brand name High Speed 1 adopted by London and Continental Railways
- September 4, 2007 – Eurostar runs its first train on HS1 between Paris and St Pancras, in record journey time of 2hr 3min
- October 2, 2007 – Hitachi opens £52m bullet train depot in Ashford
- November 14, 2007 – Section two of rail link opens between Ebbsfleet and St Pancras
- June 29, 2009 – Southeastern launches domestic trial service between Ashford and St Pancras
- September 7, 2009 – Domestic trials expanded to Ramsgate, Canterbury, Dover and Folkestone
- December 13, 2009 – Southeastern launches full domestic HS1 timetable

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QUESTION & ANSWER

DAVID PROTHERO



Q Tell us a little about yourself.

A I was born in Yorkshire and started to play the violin at school when I was eight. As a teenager I wanted to continue playing music when I left school. My Dad said that would be a tough and very competitive job choice. He was probably right, so I continued playing but also studied civil engineering.

Q How long have you been with the orchestra and what is your role?

A What was initially the Rochester Arts Orchestra started with a concert at St Nicholas' Church, Strood, in October 1969 – the same year I came to live in Medway, working for a civil engineering and building company. There were just 10 players to start with. I joined as a player about two years after that. Later, I became a section leader, joined the committee and more recently became chairman.

Q 40 years is a big landmark, what do you put the orchestra's longevity down to?

A The orchestra started rehearsing on Monday evenings in what is now the University of the Creative Arts at Fort Pitt. Rehearsals were well attended and it soon became a very friendly evening and that is a feeling everyone has helped keep. Forty years doesn't seem very long when everyone is happy. Both my children played with the orchestra and new players keep it young.

Q How has the orchestra changed over the years?

A It's grown! From those initial 10 players to a full symphony orchestra – there were nearly 80 players on the stage at the Central Theatre for the 40th anniversary concert in November. That is a superb big sound only dreamed of back in 1969. And the name has changed to match. The City of Rochester Symphony Orchestra is now well recognised.

Q What do you most enjoy about it?

A Playing music together with so many talented musicians here in Medway. And when the conductor's baton comes down for the first note, to a hushed and expectant audience of over 500 in the Central Theatre, there is the thrill as the full orchestra opens up and fills the hall with amazing rich sound.

Q What does the future hold for the orchestra?

A Always interesting change and development. New music, new players, new opportunities, new ideas, and a new website: www.CRSO.org.uk. This year we welcome Peter Bassano, our new conductor and musical director. With a long career as a player with the London Philharmonia, plus nearly 15 years as professor and Head of the Brass Faculty at the Royal College of Music, the orchestra will certainly continue to develop,

attracting eager new players and audiences to Medway's own full Symphony Orchestra.

Q What do you like to do outside the orchestra?

A Not surprisingly, play my violin. In quartets and small groups for enjoyment with friends and also to give concerts. I have electric violins which I like playing as well. I also love to see as many live performances as I can – theatre, dance, circus and all types of music.

Q Tell us something about you most people do not know.

A My father was quite wise about work – I enjoy construction work as much as music. I have worked at the first and played at the other and that way round have been very happy with both. Most people who know me as a builder don't know I'm a musician and most who know me as a musician cannot believe I am a builder (especially when they see the state of my bungalow!).

Q Who is your favourite performer and why?

A Three fiddle players, all very different ages and styles but I can't decide on my favourite: Fritz Kreisler, Stephane Grappelli and Chris Leslie. With all of them, the player, violin and listener magically become as one in the music making.

Q&A

The City of Rochester Symphony Orchestra chairman and violinist talks to **Simon Robinson** about the group's 40th anniversary celebrations and his love of construction work.

CROSSKEYS COACHES

DAY TRIPS AND TOURS

January		
Friday 8th	Westfield Shopping Centre	£14.00
Saturday 9th	Brighton Ice Show	£34.00
Sunday 17th	Brighton Ice Show	£34.00
Wednesday 20th	Maidstone & Newnham Court Shopping Village	£7.50
Saturday 23rd	Brighton Ice Show	£34.00
February		
Monday 1st	Afternoon Cite Europe	£14.00
Thursday 4th	Ikea & Lakeside	£16.50
Saturday 6th	De Panne	£19.50
Monday 15th	Dickens World	£16.00
Thursday 18th	Boulogne & Nausicaa	£25.00
Saturday 20th	Disneyland, Paris	£67.50
Wednesday 24th	Brick Lane Music Hall	£37.50
March		
Monday 1st	Afternoon Cite Europe	£14.00
Sunday 7th	London Eye & Thames Cruise	£37.50
Tuesday 9th	Westfield Shopping Centre	£17.00
Thursday 11th	Kensington Palace	£25.00
Saturday 13th	De Panne	£19.50
Friday 19th	The Stitch & Craft Show 2010 at Olympia	£22.00
Sunday 21st	Yesterdays World & Battle Abbey	£16.50
Wednesday 24th	Ideal Home Exhibition	£28.00
Thursday 25th	Boulogne	£24.00
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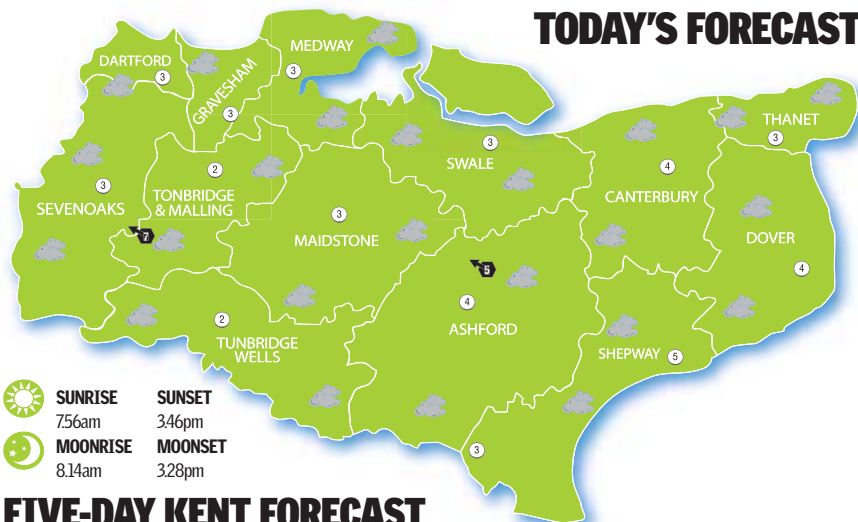
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WEEKEND HIGH TIDES

Chatham	Saturday	2:25pm	5.7m
	Sunday	3:00pm	5.6m
Dover	Saturday	12:37pm	6.2m
	Sunday	1:12pm	6.1m
Dungeness	Saturday	12:32pm	7.1m
	Sunday	1:07pm	7.0m
Ramsgate	Saturday	1:07pm	4.8m
	Sunday	1:42pm	4.7m
Sheerness	Saturday	2:15pm	5.5m
	Sunday	2:50pm	5.4m
Whitstable	Saturday	2:24pm	5.0m
	Sunday	2:56pm	4.9m

AROUND THE WORLD YESTERDAY

Amsterdam	-2°C	Madrid	6°C
Athens	14°C	New York	4°C
Barcelona	7°C	Paris	1°C
Beijing	1°C	Rome	9°C
Bombay	32°C	Sydney	21°C
Cape Town	31°C	Tenerife	23°C
Cardiff	6°C	Tokyo	10°C
Gibraltar	10°C	Vancouver	0°C
Hong Kong	22°C	Warsaw	-2°C
Las Palmas	23°C	Wellington	19°C

FIVE-DAY KENT FORECAST

	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon		Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon
Ashford	4°C	3°C	4°C	3°C	3°C	Gravesend	4°C	3°C	4°C	4°C	4°C
Canterbury	3°C	3°C	4°C	3°C	3°C	Maidstone	4°C	3°C	4°C	4°C	3°C
Chatham	4°C	4°C	5°C	4°C	5°C	Ramsgate	3°C	3°C	4°C	3°C	3°C
Dartford	4°C	3°C	4°C	4°C	4°C	Rochester	4°C	4°C	5°C	4°C	5°C
Dover	3°C	4°C	5°C	3°C	4°C	Sevenoaks	3°C	2°C	3°C	2°C	2°C
Faversham	4°C	4°C	5°C	4°C	5°C	Sittingbourne	4°C	4°C	5°C	4°C	5°C
Folkestone	3°C	4°C	5°C	3°C	4°C	Tonbridge	4°C	3°C	4°C	3°C	3°C
Gillingham	4°C	4°C	5°C	4°C	5°C	Tun Wells	4°C	3°C	4°C	3°C	3°C



DUMP SITE: Police made seven arrests in Ash Tree Lane

Police tipped off over flytipping

SEVEN suspected flytippers have been arrested after allegedly dumping a load of unwanted goods in Gillingham.

The men, who range in age from 17 to 48, were arrested after police received reports that a number of people were emptying rubbish on Ash Tree Lane on Friday, December 4.

Police Sergeant Tony Dyer said: "We were told about the offence taking place and were able to react quickly and arrest the men who were at the site."

"Flytipping can be very dangerous and affects people's quality of life."

"Working alongside our partners we are keen to prevent people from flytipping across Medway and if caught then they will face prosecution."

The men arrested were a 22-year-old from Rochester, a 48-year-old of no fixed address and five Chatham men, aged 17, 20, 23, 25 and 26.

They have all been released on bail until January 13.

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to call police on 01634 891055.

Time to get your skates on

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'I will do anything for a stable life'

■ BY NICK AMES

THE basement of an anonymous backstreet building in Calais holds supplies essential to the survival of some of the most destitute people in Europe.

Not medicines, drugs or vaccines, but simply blankets, sleeping bags and clothes – protection against the cold as winter draws on. A dedicated group of Kent-based volunteers who run the place live in fear of a police raid and the confiscating of their supplies – after all, helping refugees is a crime under French law.

Attacked and imprisoned by police, using battery acid to remove identifying fingerprints and vilified by many in the country they want to make their home, the migrants live in conditions of squalor as they nightly try to conceal themselves onto Dover-bound lorries. But some still have time to practise cricket in the area set aside for feeding them – work undertaken by charities with money from local government. Afghan asylum seekers learnt the game after spending time in Pakistani refugee camps.

"Inshallah" (God willing) they say in the hope they might one day bowl on an English village green. The supplies have been taken across the Channel by ferry by activists working for Kent Refugee Help.

They say it is vital that aid reaches the migrants after their camps were torn down and destroyed by police earlier this year.

The supplies are kept in the cellar of a building away from prying eyes. Rooms contain bedding, clothes and footwear, all of which has been donated. The migrants can come and get what they need – a constant stream as temporary shelters are destroyed



by police. The latest area for Afghans to congregate became known as the New Pashtun Jungle – an area of woodland criss-crossed by paths and backing on to a lorry park. Signs of recent habitation are everywhere and it appeared to have been abandoned in a hurry. Ahmed is from Afghanistan and recently arrived in Calais after a three-year journey from his homeland.

"I paid \$6,000 (about £4,000) to the people smugglers to get me here," he said.

"I first set out in a truck for the border with Iran and despite frequent road checks in that country I made it across with help from friends in the city of Isfahan. Kurds smuggled me into Turkey – I was there for two years before I managed to get across the border.

"After that I took buses across Europe, always getting someone else to buy my ticket as I had no passport and no identification.

"My life in Afghanistan was hell. I left all my friends and family, but I knew I had to take a chance. I think I will be given the chance to work in England. I will do anything to get a stable life."

The migrants face daily harassment from police, with the CRS riot police the most aggressive. Migrants picked up in Greece and Italy are often fingerprinted and their details kept on a database. If they are stopped again



Pictures: PHOEBE GOLDFUP

SHELTER: Refugees at the so-called New Pashtun Jungle in Calais bide their time and dream of a new life in Britain

they can be deported to those countries, but they then frequently make the same journey across Europe. Some have taken to using battery acid to remove prints by burning off skin, while others have set fire to their hands. Ahmed is also from Afghanistan and has been in Calais for months.

"The police chase us like we are animals," he said. "I have been put in prison three or four times and I have been hit by them."

But not all police behave in that manner. Some migrants tell of being given lifts to their shelters by police while another said he had been given coffee and offered wine.

Michel Flahault is a French charity worker. He said: "We are here because they are here – someone needs to help them."

The actions of the volunteers comes at a time when there is renewed criticism of the establishment of refugee help centres in France from Richard Ashworth, Conservative MEP for Kent.

He said: "Closure of the Jungle was conducted without an adequate strategy to deal with the situation and so we are seeing a return to the migrant travelling circus."

"What is obvious is that all EU governments are not fulfilling their obligations to halt the entry of illegal immigrants on Europe's southern borders."

French plan a 'honey pot' for refugees

PLANS to open a centre in Calais to help economic refugees have outraged the Conservative spokesman on immigration.

Ashford MP Damian Green said: "I think it is an insulting idea. All it will do is encourage more illegal immigration through Kent. I am appalled that the French government is setting it up."

"It will act as a honey pot for potential illegal immigrants all around the world and it will encourage more people trafficking. It is the worst possible idea."

The new day centre, which would be built next to an industrial estate in the town, is due to open before Christmas.

It will be run by the charity Catholic Help which estimates there are more than 1,000 migrants congregating in the area trying to make it to the UK.

Mr Green said the French government was passing the problem on to the UK.

"The French should deal with these people in the proper way. They can apply for asylum in France, if they do not want to do that they can be returned home."

As the winter draws near the charity says something has to be done to help those most in need. Mr Green said the Government also needed to do more to stop the UK being seen as an attractive destination for illegal migrants.

He said: "First we need our own border police force to make our borders more protected. I think a lot of people are attracted here because they think it is easy to work illegally in Britain. That is why we need a specialist border police so we can be more effective at cracking down on illegal work."

"We also need to establish international agreements to avoid this encouragement by other countries, particularly France, to encourage people to try their luck coming across the Channel."



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ON COURT: The successful four-man team from Rainham Mark Grammar School (left) and the victorious team from Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School (right)

Teams share victory in school badminton trials

TWO top grammar schools shared the spoils in the hard-fought badminton event of Medway's Secondary School Games.

Youngsters from Rainham Mark Grammar School defeated their rivals from Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School in the final of the Key Stage 3 final by a margin of two games to one.

But the Rochester school's Key Stage 4 team avenged their defeat, beating the Rainham Mark team by the same margin and ensuring bragging rights were shared.

Both teams will now represent Medway in the next Kent school's tournament.

More than 80 youngsters from seven secondary schools headed to Medway Badminton

■ BY MATHEW BEECH

Association, Gillingham, to take part in the event.

Both age group contests saw eight teams divided into leagues of four teams, with the top two progressing to the semi finals.

The Rainham Mark and Sir Joseph Williamson's teams dominated the courts in both the Key Stage 3 and 4 competitions.

Howard School's A and B teams picked up third and fourth in the Key Stage 3 tournament and their A team got bronze in the Key Stage 4 event.

Fourth place went to Chatham Grammar School for Boys.

The Fair Play award went to Hundred of

Hoo School for their sportsmanship throughout the day.

Medway Council's sports development officer John Hatchett said: "Thank you to everyone involved in making this event so successful, including staff and volunteers from Medway Badminton Club."

The Secondary School Games is a multi-sport competition that runs throughout the school year for all of Medway's primary schools.

It forms part of the Medway Games series organised by the Sports Development Team, with prizes awarded at each event and the points gained contribute towards the overall Secondary School Games title.

For more information, visit www.medway.gov.uk/london2012.

BREAK TIME

Exchange will build strong foundations

CONSTRUCTION students will head to Holland in the New Year to take part in an international exchange scheme.

The MidKent College pupils will take on classes at the Koning Willem I College in 's-Hertogenbosch, near Eindhoven, before hosting their Dutch counterparts before the end of the academic year.

The idea was finalised as the Dutch lecturers visited MidKent College's £86million Gillingham campus last month.

MidKent College lecturer John Gent said: "The exchange programme will see students exploring comparative construction methods and ways of working."

"Our involvement will provide students with a great opportunity to broaden their experience."

Dutch lecturer Gertrude Kolthoff said she was delighted her own students would get to visit the new MidKent College campus. "This building will be a wonderful place for our Dutch students to train on their visit to the UK."



DUTCH COURAGE: Chris Bolton, John Gent and Ray Fielder from MidKent College with Holland's Paul Kokke, Cor Ariëns and Gertrude Kolthoff

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TALK TIME

MARGARET HOLTBY

The Medway Festival of Music, Speech and Drama secretary talks about her love of classical music.



Tell us a bit about how you got involved with the festival.

Medway Festival of Music Speech and Drama became part of my daily existence about a year after the death of my beloved husband, Bill, in 1997.

All my life I've been involved in the Medway classical music scene. I played in the cello section of the City of Rochester Symphony Orchestra. My husband co-founded the orchestra in 1969. I was also a member of Rochester Choral Society.

Who can take part in the festival?

Only amateurs can perform and compete. Professionals can only take part as accompanists or conductors. We accept competitors of any age, and people with disabilities. The object is to give people a platform to display their talents and hone their performance skills, and we are always amazed at the standards achieved. The emphasis is on classical, but there are classes for musical theatre, pop, jazz, folk, swing and blues. There are classes for all instruments, also speech and drama.

What are your aims for the future?

I shall be retiring from the job in the not too distant future, but would love to see the festival grow.

Any final comments?

People can get a syllabus by ringing 01634 844122. The festival takes place at Fort Pitt Grammar in Chatham in the evening of Friday, April 16, 2010, and all the following day. The closing date for entries is February 1.

YOUR LETTERS

Justice is seen to be done by hi-vis offenders

BY SIMON ROBERTSON



Bright idea that's worth extending

The high-visibility jackets criminals are forced to wear when carrying out community service are a fantastic idea.

What's the good in these offenders clearing rubbish and cleaning graffiti if no-one knows they are doing it?

The sight of these youths on the streets, in the cold, carrying out mundane but socially beneficial tasks will send a clear message to anyone else who thinks they can flout the law.

I'm in favour of community service being rolled out beyond the justice system.

Why not make those raking in benefits join in? Those who take jobseekers' allowance would clearly look a bit harder to find employment if they were not allowed to simply take taxpayers' money without giving something back to the community. We need to be tougher if things are to change.

Thomas Richards, Strood, by email

We must save this delightful church

I can't believe there are plans to demolish Holy Trinity Church in Twydall. I accept it's under-used but it's Grade II listed and one of the most eye-catching buildings in the village. Let's be honest, there's not much else to look at in Twydall.

The council should protect what it has and stop allowing rich developers to build up Medway any more than they already are.

When will it end? The church should be saved. I urge the people of Twydall to rally round the building and force the developers to axe their proposals.



Name and address supplied

Soft touch land of milk and honey

I work among refugees in Cliftonville and see the reality of what goes on. The women get pregnant and once they have had the baby they have another, and another, and another. Why?

If it's that hard here, why burden yourself with another child to support? Oh, I forgot. They don't - we do.

Once moved into one of the

blocks of flats, they set about wrecking the area with litter and cars. The area becomes run down, ugly and dirty. No amount of letters from the council works - the letters sit in piles just inside the front door, unopened.

I have been asked if I want to buy a DVD, TV or even if I want certain 'services'. If they are that poor, where are they getting these goods from?

The men are usually dressed in expensive trainers and track-suits, watches and jewellery. Cars do not seem to be a problem. Where does the money come from to buy and run them?

One of the homes I visited was an 18th century house with oak panels and parquet flooring - until they burnt it all. Inside were five women; four were pregnant and I lost count at 14 children. The men were in another room watching the biggest TV I have ever seen. They have now moved out and the house is a wreck. The local population has moved out, or is trying to, because of the atmosphere created by refugees. The empty houses are then turned into yet more flats for more refugees. It's a vicious circle and there's no way out. None of these houses look clean or cared for because nobody takes pride in what they have been given. They haven't had to work for it, so why should they care? They don't understand how hard it is in this country for those of us who do work.

When I ask why they are here the answer is always the same: You people pay for us, we don't have to work, you give us everything we need, if we want more we go and get it.

Of course they are going to say different to charity workers, the government and the council; they

aren't stupid and know how to play the system. I'm not prejudiced; just fed up. Eyes need to be opened and a realistic approach made. Messages need to be sent abroad that this is no longer the land of milk and honey. We are full up, and fed up with waiting lists being jumped. I'm sorry if this letter ruffles feathers, but reality often does.

Anne Contini, Ramsgate

The search goes on

Meningitis UK would like to thank everyone who has supported us throughout 2009, a year which has marked the charity's tenth anniversary.

We have been amazed by people's generosity and dedication despite the credit crunch.

Money raised has supported our research projects at universities throughout the country, all with the aim of wiping out meningitis through developing vaccines.

Despite great advances with vaccines for meningitis C, Hib and pneumococcal meningitis, there is still no vaccine for meningitis B - the most common form of the disease in the UK. On average, six families lose a loved one to the bug each week. Our Search 4 A Vaccine Campaign aims to raise £7 million to fund research into eradicating meningitis B. The '4' signifies the fact that meningitis can kill in under four hours. In the absence of a vaccine, we distribute material to raise awareness of the symptoms and the need to act quickly.

If any of readers would like an information pack, or to support our campaign, call Meningitis UK on 0117 373 7373.

Steve Dayman, chief executive, Meningitis UK

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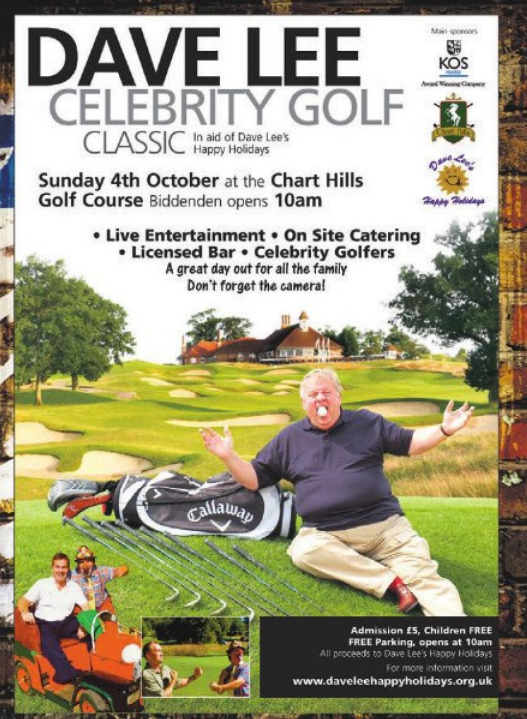
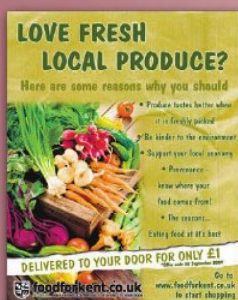
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Music students work with university's latest signings

BY SIMON ROBINSON

FOUR new up-and-coming acts have been added to a Kent university's in-house music label.

Da Mushrooms, DaylightSaving, Banu and The Mop Collective have all been added to Canterbury Christ Church's C3U Records stable. The quartet of bright young things will be unleashed on the world's music scene next year, with their debut records released in February.

These downloadable tracks will be accompanied by a tour of university campuses and London venues.

C3U Records was set up by composer Ethan Lewis Maltby and the CCC's Julia Jones as a way to promote up-and-coming acts and artists in the South East.

It offers acts assistance in all aspects of the recording industry process, including managing, recording and releasing the product both digitally and physically.

The company also has many contacts in retail stores, radio stations and clubs to help with publicity and sales.

Day-to-day running of the label is left to the commercial music and music industry management students as part of their degree studies.

Artists record and perform at the studios, with third-year production students helping to give the recordings a professional sound.

Ethan Maltby said: "We have a tremendous roster of artists this year, covering a wide range of musical genres. These are highly creative acts with exciting live shows, from experienced musicians."



"It's great to see such collaboration between the students. The artists bring students in to perform on the recording, which is carried out by production students, before the finished product is marketed by the Music Industry Management students."

"It all comes together to give an insight into the various processes of a record label."

For more visit www.c3urecords.co.uk

THE BANDS

Da Mushrooms - www.myspace.com/damushrooms - They have an EP available on iTunes and Amazon.co.uk and are currently finishing off their second record.

DaylightSaving - www.myspace.com/daylightsavingjazz - Their EP is available on iTunes and Amazon.co.uk and they are currently finishing off their second record.

Banu - www.myspace.com/banumuzik - She is currently finishing off her first EP for the label.

The Mop Collective - www.myspace.com/themopcollective - Just finishing off their first album.

SIGNINGS: The Mop Collective, above, and Banu



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Callista sing the Kings of Leon's Use Somebody.



Ebony Johnson from Dover sings Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah



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- 1 Gristlefridge - Unbreakable (from Whitstable)
- 2 White Eyes - We Are Tides (from Canterbury)
- 3 Shelta - Lets Talk (from Bexley)
- 4 Motion Picture Soundtrack - Faults of A Realist (from Canterbury)
- 5 Facades - Ghost (from Canterbury)

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■ Canterbury Hypnotherapy

PAMELA Brett-Sims is a qualified Counsellor, Psychotherapist, and Master Practitioner of both Clinical Hypnosis and Neuro-linguistic programming.

These therapies combine to change the programming of the unconscious mind. It is the unconscious mind which controls our learned behaviours – in other words our habits.

In the same way we walk, talk, drive instinctively we also learn to smoke, overeat, drink too much and these also become automatic. It is only when we try to stop by will power that we find out how truly difficult it is.

But these habits can be changed! At the Canterbury Hypnotherapy Practice, Pamela is very successfully helping clients take back control of their behaviours and habits and therefore their lives.

She treat clients for addictions including food, smoking, alcohol, gambling, even shopping; phobias, anxiety, depression and panic attacks; self confidence and stress.

The Stop Smoking Programme has an independently researched success rate of 95 per cent of which Pamela is very proud. For more information call 0800 0830755.

Obesity is another health issue dealt with at the clinic. It is the fastest growing problem



affecting the nation's health and life expectancy. Two-thirds of the nation are overweight or classified as obese.

Obesity can contribute to a range of problems, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoarthritis and some cancers. Being clinically obese shortens life expectancy by, on average, nine years.

If you have a BMI of over 35 you are 80 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than if your BMI was 21. Even if you are just two stone overweight, your chances of dying

from a heart attack doubles. For most people, losing a small amount of weight can have benefits.

The Lighterlife Programme is a proven, approach to long-term weight loss designed for obese patients. More than 1,000 UK GPs have had patients join the programme and achieve significant, (sustained) weight loss.

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Cutting down on food is as difficult for the obese as is reducing intake for smokers and those with an alcohol problem. An abstinence model largely resolves this issue.

Pamela says weight gain is often a symptom of complex issues. Obese patients need to challenge the reasons why they have been using food in the way they have. Long-term behavioural changes are needed to lose weight and maintain weight loss

Clients are helped to change their lives drastically. The clinic can save lives as it helps many people to stop smoking and reduces weight, giving them a new lease of life.

Their motto is "Live the life you want to live".

Pamela Brett-Sims, Canterbury Hypnotherapy/Lighterlife Programme, Telephone 01227 782021



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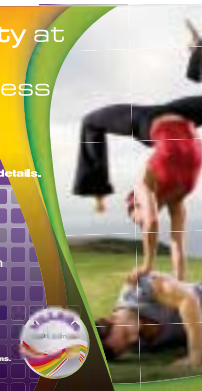
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He's an old ladies' man

Cornish comedian Jethro knows just how far he
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JETHRO

Various dates

Various venues



START the New Year with
some big belly laughs as
Cornish comic Jethro
returns to Kent.

Despite only appearing on televi-
sion a handful of times during his
long career, the wag from the West
Country has performed live to more
than three million people and is
familiar to UK comedy fans.

Once the rigours of Christmas are
over, give yourself something to look
forward to by booking a ticket to see
this consummate professional in
action.

This hard-working entertainer is
continuously on tour and feels the
need to work almost incessantly, but
his efforts have won him countless
fans and an unrelenting demand for
tickets to his live shows. But he start-
ed out as a carpenter and it was only
when the 18-year-old Jethro – whose
real name is Jeffrey Rowe – joined
the local operatic society that his
career in show business began.

Discovering that he could hold a
tune, he began to play guitar and
sing songs in local pubs. Yet it was a
night when his singing voice dried up
that Jethro unwittingly stumbled
across his vocation.

When he decided to tell a few funny
stories instead, the reaction was
immediate and the following week he
had a large audience, all eager to
hear some jokes.

It took many years of working on
the club circuit during the 70s and
80s before Jethro finally hit the big
time. His hugely successful appear-
ances on the Des O'Connor Tonight
show won him legions of fans, includ-
ing many older people, which is quite
surprising given the near-the-knuckle
nature of much of his material.

Speaking to KOS Media in 2007,
Jethro said he believed his strong fol-
lowing among the older generation
was down to his comic judgement.

"There are some things I don't



touch, like religion, because it's not
funny and I don't need to," he said.

"There's a line that I don't cross. I'm
probably the biggest draw for old
ladies in England. I'm too blue really,
though they think I'm just accept-
able. They're a bit dubious at first,
but when they realise I won't go any

further, they love it. It's lovely to see
old ladies laugh."

Jethro can be seen at the Assembly
Hall in Tunbridge Wells on January
10; the Orchard Theatre in Dartford
on February 1; the Central Theatre
in Chatham on March 4 and the Leas
Cliff Hall in Folkestone on April 26.



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ROBINSON CRUSOE: THE LOST JEDI KNIGHT

Various Dates
Kings Theatre, Chatham

CHILDREN can embark on an intergalactic adventure and help to tell the story with Spotlites.

The theatre company is renowned for its interactive shows that get children's imaginations going and allow them to get on stage with the actors.

There is always plenty going on at the Kings Theatre and this winter's highlight will be Robinson Crusoe: the Lost Jedi Knight.

Jedi Knight Crusoe has been entrusted with an important secret, but when he crash lands on the Lost Planet, can he survive until the Princess arrives?



Aimed at five to 12-year-olds, the show is an exciting adventure story in which Sith Pirates are battled with real light sabres, the Dark Side's droids must be blasted on the Dark Planet and the

Force must be mastered.

The show can be seen on various dates from today to Wednesday, April 28.

To book call 01634 829468 or visit www.spotlites.co.uk for more information.

ELVIS AT CHRISTMAS

Friday, December 18
Marlowe Theatre Arena,
Canterbury



CELEBRATE Christmas with the King when the UK's top impersonator visits Canterbury.

Lee 'Memphis' King was named the Best Elvis Tribute Artist in the World at the 2005 Collingwood Elvis Festival in Canada.

He got the judges all shook up with his authentic voice impersonation, personality, look and stage presence which make him the next best thing to seeing Presley himself on stage.

King became an Elvis fan when he saw the film Roustabout as a small child and began to impersonate the singer's voice very early on. He has developed an act that channels that passion into bringing Elvis's music to audiences everywhere.

"To me, Elvis was the



greatest performer and vocalist of the last century and I constantly strive for perfection when I perform his songs," he said.

Take a musical journey through Presley's career from the early rock 'n' roll

years to his comeback in 1968, right through to the later years in Las Vegas.

The show starts at 7.30pm. Tickets are £19.50/ £18.50 from the box office on 01227 787787 or at www.newmarlowetheatre.org.uk.

ANTFESTIVE

Wednesday December 23
Beacon Court Tavern, Gillingham



KICK off Christmas with a fantastic evening of great music at the fundraising event, Antfestive.

Following their triumphant appearance at Antfest in the summer, the mighty Floors & Walls (pictured) will travel up from Brighton to entertain a Medway crowd once again.

As winners of the Global Battle of the Bands, Floors & Walls are on their way up and fans should not miss this chance to see them in action.

Local band The Startover, from Gravesend, are also heading for big things, having recently signed to Engineer Records. Also on the line-up is new band Superpartyfuntimes, along with Strangeday, Call Off the Search and Calico Street Riots.

All money raised at the



event will go to the Arethusa Centre in Upnor, which provides adventurous outdoor activities for all sorts of people including children in need.

More information about

the centre can be found at www.arethusa.org.uk.

Doors open at 7pm and tickets cost £5. For more information about Antfestive go to www.myspace.com/antfest or www.antfest.co.uk.

MEDWAY LEISURE

Young artists can win tickets to family show

CHILDREN are invited to design a back cover of the programme for Three Towns Theatre's next production.

Beauty and the Beast is at Chatham's Brook Theatre in March and children aged four to 11 can enter the competition. The winner will win four tickets to the show. Send A4 entries, with contact details and school year on the back, to Gwyneth Loft, 83A Edwin Road, Rainham ME8 0AE by January 31.

Embroiderers invite you to Christmas party

JOIN the North Kent Embroiderers Guild's Christmas party in Gravesend.

The Guild joins forces with the Young Embroiderers for quizzes, competitions and refreshments at the St Andrew's Centre in Royal Pier Road at 2pm on Saturday. The sweet competition will be judged by the Young Embroiderers.

Admission is £2 for members and £4 for non-members. Go to www.northkentembroiderers.co.uk.

Now theatre has a seat with your name on it

PICK the best seat in the house as the Orchard Theatre in Dartford introduces a new booking facility.

Customers booking online can choose their seats, instead of being allocated the best available. The system also allows patrons to see the view of the stage from different sections of the auditorium. Visit www.orchardtheatre.co.uk, call 01322 220000 or book at the theatre.

Bad Pennies turn up to pay homage to greats

FOR an evening of top rock and blues, head to the Alexandra Hotel, Chatham.

Bad Pennies is a Medway-based band that pays tribute to the likes of Jimi Hendrix, Rory Gallagher, Thin Lizzy, Gary Moore and more. Find out more at www.badpennies.co.uk.

They will be at the venue in Railway Street at 5pm on Sunday. For more information call 01634 830545.

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There is live music on a Thursday night
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Small or large groups are all catered for
and the pub is particularly popular with
hikers who enjoy the excellent landscape.

They regularly book tables for up to 20
and 30 walkers.

The See Ho has been an institution in
the Medway area for many years and is
open from 11 am until 3pm and 6pm
until 11pm each day.

Current top sellers on the menu are a
home made rabbit pie, rib eye steak,
homemade steak in ale pie, fillet steak
and lamb shank.

A £3 lunch special is also available
and all the dishes are homemade. On
the menu is meatloaf mash with
fresh vegetables, fishcakes, chips and
peas and various pasties with chips and
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All of the dishes are complemented
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Give the curry challenge a go

■ Spice Court

SPICE Court in Balmoral Road, Gillingham, serves delicious and nutritious food – and it is now contributing to the art of the area as well.

Priding itself on the quality of food and friendliness of service, the speciality is quality contemporary Indian and Bangladeshi cuisine.

The restaurant has won many awards, including recognition by the Cobra Good Curry Guide.

Situated just off Gillingham High Street customers have plenty of easy access – particularly after a hard day shopping or just sampling the street market.

With a modern décor and candles and flowers provided, family meals, groups of friends and couples are equally well catered for.

The venue is open both Christmas Eve and over the New Year and is currently running a Hottest Curry competition.

Diners who eat the whole of a normal-sized curry dish of chicken or lamb flavoured with naga chilli receive a free bottle of wine.

But those who can't manage it are asked to donate £10 to Armed Forces charity Help for Heroes.

Current top dishes include Marisa chicken made with fresh chilli, Taba Chicken, garlic herb yoghurt and sizzling chicken with Worcester sauce, peppers and fresh garlic.

Spice Thursday is also a popular feature – a starter, main course, side dish, rice or naan bread and ice cream for just £10.

The restaurant is open Monday to Thursday from noon until 2.30pm and 6-11.30pm, on Fridays and Saturdays from noon until 2.30pm and 6pm until midnight and on Sundays from noon until 11pm.

Spice Court, Balmoral Road, Gillingham 01634 850150
Facebook page – spicecourt fancub

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Village Hotel

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Main course: Mussels Mariniere and fries, with shallots, garlic, white wine & cream

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Prince of Wales

Starter: Oven-baked Camembert with cranberry jelly and toast
Main course: Indian marinated chicken breast with new potatoes and vegetables

Dessert: Traditional spotted dick with custard
Telephone: 01227 860338

King's Head

Starter: Thai fish cakes with lime and chilli dip

Main course: Huntsman chicken – oven-roasted chicken breast filled with cheese and wrapped in bacon

Dessert: Chocolate fudge Cake and cream
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Starter: Tandoori mixed starter selection – tandoori chicken, lamb tikka, chicken tikka, and sheek kebab

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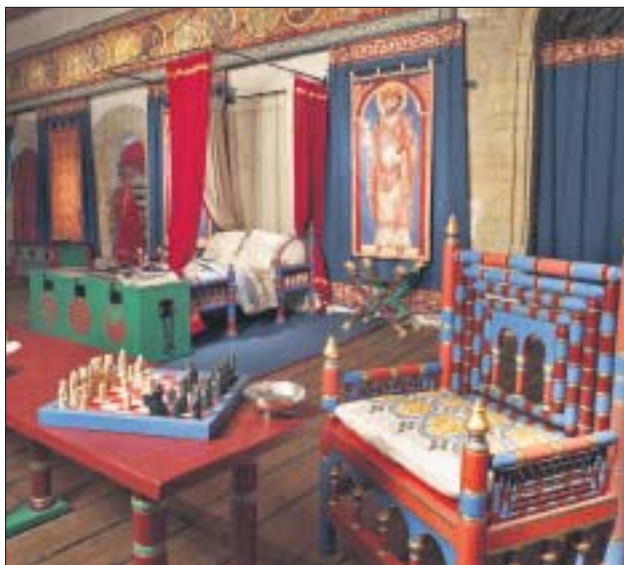
THURSDAY Fish & Chip Night

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WIN! A royal medieval Christmas family adventure at Dover Castle



A NEW series of festive medieval events are running at Henry II's Great Tower at Dover Castle – The Lord of Misrule this Saturday and Sunday, and Twelfth Knight, Sunday, December 27 and Bank Holiday Monday, December 28 and again Saturday, January 2 until Monday January 4.

To celebrate, we've teamed up with English Heritage to offer SEVEN families a FREE day out at a colourful event just after Christmas. Our top prize winner will get free entry and be treated like royalty with a two course meal served by King Henry II whilst a troubadour entertains them!

This weekend King Henry II's court will turn topsy-turvy during Lord of Misrule – when a visitor is crowned Christmas King to preside over a host of medieval festive revelries.

After Christmas, the king will be recruiting for bold young knights to serve him in Twelfth Knight, when chivalrous boys and girls will undergo knightly training.

Even if you're not a lucky winner you can still take the family along – these colourful events run 10am to 4pm each day.

Find Dover Castle (CT16 1HU) east of Dover town. www.english-heritage.co.uk/dovercastle

TOP PRIZE

• Free family entry (two adults, three children under 16) to the castle to enjoy Twelfth Knight and a two course meal at the castle served by King Henry II!

RUNNER-UP PRIZES

• Six family tickets to the Twelfth Knight event.

To enter, simply answer the question below and send your entry on a postcard along with your email address (if applicable), name, address, and daytime telephone number to Dover Castle Competition, KOS Media, Apple Barn, Smeech, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SR. The closing date is December 21, 2009.

Question: Which king built the Great Tower at Dover Castle?

A. Henry II

B. Henry VIII

C. William the Conqueror

All prizes must be taken on Bank Holiday, Monday, December 28.

No purchase necessary. For our full Terms and Conditions please visit www.kentnews.co.uk, or for a posted copy of the T&Cs call 01303 817073. If you do not wish to receive any literature please write 'no literature' on your entry.

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PROPERTY NEWS

Red tape 'likely to put landlords off renting'

LANDLORD Assist is complaining that landlords are likely to be facing more red tape that could increase costs and deter entrants to the private rental market.

According to the tenant arrears and eviction specialist, regulations for social housing landlords are likely to find their way into the private rental sector.

Measures recently announced by the Tenant Services Authority, due to come into force in April, propose a greater emphasis on the relationship between landlords and their tenants at a local level.

The changes aim to encourage tenants to influence and monitor the services they receive and social landlords could face large fines or lose their property management rights for failing to comply.

Housing minister John Healey is hopeful that the legislation will mean repairs are right first time, anti-social behaviour is reduced and tenants have a proper say in the management of their properties.

However Landlord Assist managing director, Graham Kinnear, is concerned that if extended to the private rental sector, the added bureaucracy could deter entrants to the market.

He explained: "Rafts of policy and legislation, which require the landlord to do even more than currently required are, in our view, unnecessary and may well discourage landlords from entering the market, thereby reducing the choice and quality of accommodation available."

Re-mortgaging down in buy-to-let market

THE number of people choosing to remortgage their buy-to-let property is at a two-year low, according to figures.

Paragon Mortgages' Financial Adviser Confidence Tracker Index revealed only 39 per cent of home loan activity in the buy-to-let sector was for remortgages in the third quarter of this year.

This is compared to property purchases in the same period, where 48 per cent of landlords took out a mortgage in order to expand their portfolios in preparation for an economic recovery.

John Heron, managing director of Paragon Mortgages, explained why landlords are not remortgaging.

"They can't because of the low number of mortgages available and there is little incentive to do so because the reversion rates when coming off an introductory deal are so attractive," he said.



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£2.5m loans help to get empty homes restored

■ BY NICK AMES

NO Use Empty, the initiative helping to bring empty properties in Kent back into use, has approved a further £1 million worth of interest-free loans this month.

A partnership between Kent County Council and district councils, No Use Empty has been combating the ongoing problem of empty housing, issuing £2.5 million worth of interest-free loans to date.

The problem of empty housing is particularly important at a time when the current economic climate makes it very difficult for people to borrow money.

This new batch of loans will benefit boroughs all over the county, some of whom have recently joined the scheme.

In Thanet, several new loans have been awarded, including £175,000 in Cliftonville for a property which was originally part of The Landmark Hotel.

A loan for £135,000 has been awarded to another property in Cliftonville which dates back to the 1800s, and is currently being converted into eight self-contained two-bedroom apartments.

In Ramsgate, two flats at Granville House, a former hotel on Victoria Parade, have been awarded £50,000.

Another property benefiting from the scheme in Ramsgate, to the tune of £25,000, is a two-storey mid-terrace house with a basement dating back to the 1850s.

In Dover, a £50,000 loan has been awarded to Stour Valley Estates Ltd.

The Greyhound Pub, which has been empty since 2007 and is within the conservation



area, is now undergoing redevelopment following planning permission.

And close to the Eastern Docks, £125,000 has been awarded for the redevelopment of a terrace of three houses once known as Cliff Court Hotel.

The properties are on the sea front and date back to 1840. The developer has already been awarded planning permission for 22 flats across all three houses.

The first loan has been awarded in Shepway, for a Victorian house in Folkestone. County Commercial Properties Ltd has been given £50,000 to do up the building.



Rents set to rise as supply drops off

UK RESIDENTIAL property rents are expected to increase in the New Year as the number of homes coming on to the market falls for the first time since January 2008.

According to a new survey, the recent pick-up in the property market seems to have led to drop-off in the number of rental properties, particularly houses, being made available and as a result, surveyor optimism has increased.

Some 22 per cent of surveyors now expect rents to rise rather than fall in the next three months, says the latest RICS Lettings Survey.

The drop-off in supply is the main driver for the more positive sentiment, with new instructions reaching their lowest level since the survey began in 1998.

Only four per cent of chartered surveyors are still reporting falling rather than rising rents, indicating the downward pressure on rents is already starting to ease.

Significantly, London and the North are already seeing the majority of surveyors reporting price rises over the past three months.

Demand for rental property is still rising, as 16 per cent more surveyors saw activity pick up over the past three months, with demand for houses particularly strong in London.

"It seems the current upward trend in the housing market is having a significant effect on the lettings market, with many of the accidental landlords returning to the sales market

to take advantage of the recent price increases," said RICS spokesman Jeremy Leaf.

"As a result the recent oversupply is reversing, with new instructions at the lowest levels we have ever seen.

"This of course is impacting on prices, and tenants no longer have as strong a bargaining power as they did," he added.

The report's findings are echoed by a survey from Rightmove, the UK's number one property website for lettings, that shows more than a third of people who will rent a property over the next 12 months expect prices in the rental market to increase.

Just seven per cent of renters think that prices will fall.

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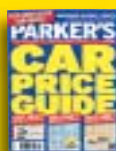
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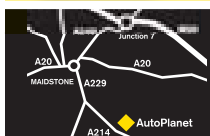
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Closing date: Friday 15 January 2009

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Application forms and further details are available from www.midkent.ac.uk. Alternatively, please e-mail job.applications@midkent.ac.uk. For individuals without access to e-mail or the internet please call the HR department on 01634 884402 (24 hour answer machine). In all communication with the College please quote the appropriate job title and reference number.

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SAVED: Steffan Gaisie came close in the first-half

FOOTBALL

New boy nets late on in Chatham win

Walton Casuals 0 Chatham Town 1

A LATE goal from Cedric Ngakam gave Chatham Town a much-needed boost and helped make amends for their FA Cup exit against Walton Casuals earlier this season.

The defender, playing only his second league game for the club, fired home at a corner eight minutes from time. It was only the second win in eight league games for the Chats, who climbed back into the top eight.

Manager Alex O'Brien had asked the rest of his side to chip in with more goals to take the burden off his strikers and he was delighted to see a defender get on the scoresheet. He said: "I told the players you don't have to be a striker to score. Good sides get goals from all over the team – ten from a midfielder, ten from your centre-backs, etc – it's unfair to rely on the forwards all the time."

Before the late strike it was looking like another frustrating afternoon for the Chats. Brendon Cass and Steffan Gaisie came close in the first-half and the visitors had a strong penalty appeal turned down.

There were few chances in a scrappy second-half until Ngakam took his chance well to clinch victory. O'Brien now wants to build on the result and become more consistent.

He said: "I'm not stupid, we're a team in that bracket who can win a game well and then lose to a poor side in the next game. We're trying to stamp that out as quickly as possible."

Third-placed Godalming Town visit Maidstone Road on Saturday.

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SCORE DRAW: Invicta Dynamos were in danger of losing their first home game, but goals from Nolan Boike and Peter Vaisanen salvaged a point against Chelmsford Chieftains



Import duo turn on the style in Mos comeback

ICE HOCKEY

■ BY DAVID PRITCHARD

Invicta Dynamos 2

Chelmsford Chieftains 2

INVICTA Dynamos were forced to come from behind to claim a draw in an absorbing top of the table clash with Chelmsford Chieftains on Sunday.

The visitors built a deserved two-goal lead early on but strikes from import duo Nolan Boike and Peter Vaisanen levelled the game. Despite a frantic final period which enthralled the big crowd at the Gillingham Ice Bowl, neither side could claim a winner.

It was the first time the Mos had failed to win in front of their home fans this season but head coach Kevin Parrish was content with the result, which kept his side well clear at the top.

He said: "It's a point gained definitely, if you're 2-0 down you'd take anything at that stage. It still keeps up six points clear of them so as long as we can keep these gaps we'll be fine."

"I think they underestimate themselves, they keep talking about just making the play-offs, but they'll definitely be there or thereabouts. I don't think there's another team in the league

that can skate with them apart from us. We showed that and I think they'll be classics every time we play."

The Mos had their training session on Thursday cancelled due to a problem with the ice and the lack of preparation showed as the Chieftains caught them cold in the first period.

On a powerplay Adam Copland netted from range against his old club. Darren Brown finished a flowing move to double the tally with 12 minutes gone.

Boike pulled a goal back from close range before the first break to get the Mos within touching distance.

The second period saw the netminders take

centre stage. Both faced more than 50 shots on goal in total, going on to claim their side's man of the match awards, and they ensured a blank second period.

The Mos finished the game strongly and drew level with a goal from Vaisanen 13 minutes from time. Complaints about a problem with the lights at one end saw the teams switch ends halfway through the final period, but it did nothing to disrupt the home side.

A week earlier the Mos had claimed a last-gasp winner in Essex but despite their best efforts, lightning didn't strike twice.

Parrish was happy with a draw and praised top scorer Vaisanen for his efforts.

He said: "You know what you're going to get out of Pete, he gives 110 per cent week-in week-out whether he's playing against Chelmsford or Peterborough when we beat them 14-0. He keeps putting the puck away, hopefully we'll just get him moving it a little bit quicker at times and he'll start picking up assists as well."

The Mos host Haringey Greyhounds this Sunday. Face-off is at 5.15pm.

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Away day hoodoo strikes again for Stimson's Gills

FOOTBALL

BY DAVID PRITCHARD

Huddersfield Town 2

Novak 40, Rhodes 45

Gillingham 1

Jackson 3

GILLINGHAM'S winless away run in League One continued despite taking an early lead against high-flying Huddersfield Town.

Simeon Jackson gave the visitors an early lead before two goals just before half-time proved decisive for the Terriers. The home side had the best chances after the break and could have won more comfortably, but in the end settled for the narrow win.

Gills boss Mark Stimson was without Simon Royce, who injured a knee in a car accident and Curtis Weston, who was unavailable attending a family problem. Josh Gowling was also suspended, so Mark Bentley switched to centre-back. Alan Julian took over in goal, while Jack Payne and Dennis Oli started in a five-man midfield.

Gillingham arrived with the worst away record in League One, but they silenced the home crowd by taking the lead. Kevin Maher slipped in Jackson, who finished well for his first away goal this season.



Picture: ADY KERRY

FALSE DAWN: Simeon Jackson gave Gills hope of breaking their away duck with an early goal, but Huddersfield hit back to win

But Huddersfield had averaged more than three goals a game at home and struck twice in the five minutes before half-time through Lee Novak and Jordan Rhodes.

The Terriers had the best of the second-half but were kept out by a spirited defensive display. Barry Fuller cleared one effort off the line and Julian made several excellent stops to keep the visitors in the game.

The result extended Gillingham's winless away run in League One to 11 games. They slipped down two places to 18th but remain two points clear of the relegation zone after the bottom four all lost.

Before the game the Gills agreed an extension to Matt Fry's loan deal, which was due to run out last weekend. The 19-year-old will remain at Priestfield for another month, with the Gills hoping to then take the West Ham defender on loan until the end of the season.

Gillingham starting XI



Subs used: Yussuff (Lewis 72), McCammon (Payne 77), Rooney (Oli 87)

In the other direction the club are expecting to agree a deal for Adam Miller to stay with Dagenham & Redbridge. The midfielder's loan expired on Saturday but the clubs began talks last week to allow a second month with a view to a permanent move.

Miller has publicly stated his time at Priestfield was over and although Stimson disagreed, he is willing to do a deal.

He said: 'I've not closed the door, Adam's said a few things and he thinks it's closed. Once a player gets that in his head it's hard to change, now it's a matter of the clubs coming to some agreement for him to make the move permanent.'

'He feels he's done enough here and wants to move on. Fair play for him being honest, he's said a few things I thought he didn't mean but he's sticking by his guns and would prefer now to move on.'

Next up for the Gills is a home game against rock bottom Stockport County on Saturday, their final game before Christmas.

RUGBY



Picture: ALAN BOURNE

ON TARGET: Medway's Glen Wadsworth

Medway stutter against lowly Park

Park House 20 Medway 16

A POOR first-half performance cost Medway as they lost out to an improving Park House side on Saturday.

The home side, bottom of London 3 South East due to a points penalty, took an early lead with a converted try which owed more to Medway's missed tackles than any attacking inspiration.

Glen Wadsworth kicked a penalty but it did little to fire up the visitors. Park House dictated play and got their reward by scoring two tries before half-time to build a commanding lead. Both came from driving mauls and sent the home side 17 points clear.

The visitors finally roused themselves just before the break and began to create openings themselves, only for a lack of composure at the crucial moment to undo their good work.

Medway came out for the second-half fired up, but again their decision-making let them down, with overlaps ignored or choosing the wrong kicking option.

Their pressure did produce some success, with Roger Rhyneheart bundling over for a try. Wadsworth converted and added two penalties to get the visitors within four points.

In the final 15 minutes they pounded Park House's line in search of the winning try, but the hosts hung on for a well-deserved victory.

Medway, whose run of two defeats in the last three games represents their worst spell of the season, host Old Gravesendians at Priestfields this Saturday.

It is their final competitive game of the year and whatever the result they are certain to head into the New Year in the top half of the division, a considerable achievement for the newly-promoted side.

LEAGUE TABLES

COCA-COLA LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	Gd	Pt
1 Leeds United	20	14	5	1	+27	47
2 Charlton Athletic	21	13	6	2	+19	45
3 Norwich City	21	11	6	4	+18	39
4 Colchester United	21	11	6	4	+16	39
5 Huddersfield Town	21	10	5	6	+20	35
6 Bristol Rovers	21	11	1	9	0	34
7 Milton Keynes Dons	21	10	3	8	-1	33
8 Millwall	21	8	8	5	+7	32
9 Swindon Town	19	8	7	4	-1	31
10 Walsall	21	8	6	7	+3	30
11 Carlisle United	21	7	6	8	-2	27
12 Hartlepool United	21	7	5	9	0	26
13 Southend United	21	7	5	9	-3	26
14 Southampton (-10)	21	9	8	4	+13	25
15 Yeovil Town	21	5	9	7	-4	24
16 Oldham Athletic	21	6	6	9	-8	24
17 Brentford	21	5	8	8	-6	23
18 Gillingham	21	6	4	11	-6	22
19 Exeter City	21	5	7	9	-8	22
20 Leyton Orient	21	6	4	11	-12	22
21 Brighton & Hove A	21	5	5	11	-15	20
22 Wycombe Wanderers	21	4	5	12	-14	17
23 Tranmere Rovers	21	5	2	14	-24	17
24 Stockport County	20	3	5	12	-19	14

RYMAN DIVISION ONE SOUTH (TOP HALF)

	P	W	D	L	Gd	Pt
1 Folkestone Invicta	20	14	5	1	+18	47
2 Worthing	21	14	1	6	+19	43
3 Godalming Town	19	12	2	5	+15	38
4 Walton & Hersham	20	11	4	5	+8	37
5 Croydon Athletic	18	10	5	3	+21	35
6 Fleet Town	19	10	2	7	+11	32
7 Ramsgate	19	9	4	6	+7	31
8 Chatham Town	21	9	3	9	-2	30
9 Merstham	19	8	5	6	+1	29
10 Dulwich Hamlet	20	6	8	6	0	26
11 Sittingbourne	17	7	4	6	+3	25

KENT LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION TABLE

	P	W	D	L	Gd	Pt
1 Faversham Town	14	11	2	1	+25	35
2 Herne Bay	12	8	1	3	+10	25
3 Sevenoaks Town	14	7	3	4	+6	24
4 Erith & Belvedere	13	8	0	5	+2	24
5 Hythe Town	11	5	4	2	+16	19
6 Beckenham Town	12	6	1	5	+8	19
7 Tunbridge Wells	14	4	7	3	+3	19
8 Erith Town	11	5	3	3	+7	18
9 Greenwich Borough	13	5	3	5	-1	18
10 Deal Town	12	4	4	4	-4	16
11 Sporting Bengal Utd	13	4	3	6	-13	15
12 Norton Sports	11	4	1	6	-2	13
13 Holmesdale	13	4	1	8	-5	13
14 Fisher	16	3	3	10	-18	12
15 Corinthian	12	2	3	7	-13	9
16 Lordswood	11	0	3	8	-21	3

FIXTURES (Saturday): Coca-Cola League One: Gillingham v Stockport County; Ryman Division One South: Chatham Town v Godalming Town; Kent League Premier Division: Lordswood v Hythe Town

Robson sets sights on avoiding the drop

FOOTBALL

MARK Robson believes avoiding relegation in League One this season would be as big an achievement for Gillingham as winning promotion in the previous campaign.

The Gills have made a steady return to the division this season and are in a pack of sides sitting just above the bottom four. While simply staying up would lack the sparkle of last season's play-off win at Wembley, Robson, the club's first team coach, insists it would be just as satisfying.

He said: 'Realistically yes, we've got more or less the same team as last year so to stay up in a better division playing higher quality teams week-in week-out would be a massive achievement. I think it would be dreaming if we thought we were going to get to the play-offs. We didn't expect that, anything above staying up would be a bonus for us.'

The biggest threat to the club's League One security is their away form, with Saturday's defeat at Huddersfield their eighth successive defeat on the road. Robson admits it is a new experience to be involved in a side which has such contrasting fortunes between results home and away.

He said: 'I've not really experienced this sort of thing before. I may well have done early in my playing days but certainly in my coaching days I've not really been with a team that's great at home and can't win away. It's pretty tough because it's in your mind and players are obviously thinking



Picture: ADY KERRY

GOAL: Mark Robson is focused on survival for Gillingham

about it. We're trying our hardest to keep them focused that they can achieve things away.'

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